Edwards Secures Funding to Help Texas A&M Fight Nuclear Terrorism, Develop Renewable Energy, and Continue Innovative Agricultural Research

(WASHINGTON) – Congressman Chet Edwards announced funding to help Texas A&M University fight nuclear terrorism, develop renewable energy sources, and continue its advanced agricultural research. The funding was included by Edwards in the final 2009 Appropriations bill, which passed the House today by a vote of 245 to 178.

“Investing in priority projects that support our national defense, diversify our domestic energy resources, and invest in agricultural research is vital to our nation as well as the economic growth of Brazos County,” said Edwards, a senior member of the House Appropriations Committee.

One of Edwards’ top priorities was securing funding for Texas A&M programs that help fight nuclear terrorism. Edwards secured $1.9 million for the Nuclear Security Science and Policy Institute (NSSPI) at Texas A&M, a valuable partner that helps the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) solve key nuclear security problems and produce the next generation of nuclear security experts that will detect, prevent, and reverse the proliferation of nuclear and radiological weapons throughout the world. The nuclear engineering program at Texas A&M is considered the nation’s largest and fastest growing program in the United States and recently ranked with MIT as one of the top three nuclear engineering programs in the world. Edwards secured $2 million for this program in 2008.

“Protecting our nation from nuclear terrorism must be a top national priority, and my long term goal is to see that when the Department of Energy turns to a research institution for expert advice on nuclear terrorism issues, they turn to Texas A&M University,” said Edwards.

“I applaud Chet Edwards’ continued leadership and support of Texas A&M programs addressing issues of national security, while helping educate our country’s future engineering workforce,” said Dr. G. Kemble Bennett, vice chancellor and dean of Texas A&M Engineering. “This funding will enable the Nuclear Security Science and Policy Institute to advance important new technologies, prepare future leaders who understand both the technical and policy aspects, and ultimately, ensure the peaceful use of nuclear energy worldwide.” Edwards applauded the inclusion of $17.7 million for 22 farming, forestry and animal health research programs for the Texas A&M System under the bill. The $17.7 million will fund research programs for Texas A&M including a study of the effects of the Farm Bill on regional farming communities, research to eliminate pathogens from food and water without chemicals, livestock and dairy policy research, the sustainability of irrigation in rural communities, and revegetation of training acreage for soldiers at Fort Hood.

“We greatly appreciate Congressman Edwards’ support for programs of Agrilife Research and Agrilife Extension; He is a true friend Texas A&M and Texas agriculture. These programs will allow Texas agriculture producers to remain competitive in a global market by targeting

research priorities which benefit Texas while preserving Texas natural resources," said Dr. Mark Hussey, the Director, Texas Agrilife Research for the Texas A&M system.

"The innovative agriculture research at Texas A&M plays a key role in ensuring that Americans have access to the safest, low cost food supply in the world, and these important programs will help protect family farms, provide training ranges for Fort Hood soldiers, and support our economy," Edwards said.

Edwards also secured $951,500 for Texas A&M research that will help respond to the worldwide need to develop the next generation of clean, renewable alternative energy sources. In Texas, sorghum is plentiful, energy efficient and drought resistant, and Texas A&M researchers have determined that sorghum holds the most promise for biomass production in Texas and the South. The development of practices to produce, harvest, and transport billions of tons of biomass will ensure it is a sustainable fuel for domestic energy independence.

"Texas A&M is a global leader in agricultural research, and developing more renewable domestic energy sources will not only help lessen our dependence on foreign oil, it will improve our economy, protect the environment, and plan for the future in a responsible manner," said Edwards.

Finally, Edwards secured $500,000 for Project Protect, a Texas A&M a program that trains school administrators, community resource personnel, teachers and students in the skills necessary to prepare, prevent, respond, and recover from terrorist activities and violent acts in the school environment.

"The training provided by Project Protect will help first responders and educators, who are the first to respond to acts of violence in our communities, quickly respond to protect our children and citizens in the event of an attack," said Edwards.

Edwards also secured $1 million for Texas A&M for space engineering and robotics technologies. Texas A&M's robotics research will enable multiple robots to collaborate under human supervision in exploration activities for NASA.

"Developing new robotics technology for NASA is an important responsibility for Texas A&M that will help us all learn more about our universe and may help develop technologies that will help us here at home," said Edwards.